NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-9988 JANUARY 19, 1976
LINDA CASHDAN

NEW CANCER INSTITUTE STUDY

ANNCR:

THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE HAS PUBLISHED A NEW STUDY ON THE TREATMENT OF CANCER IN THE UNITED STATES. LINDA CASHDAN HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

DESPITE THE MANY YEARS AND MANY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS SPENT ON RESEARCH, DISCOVERING A CURE FOR CANCER IS STILL AN ELUSIVE MEDICAL GOAL. THAT IS, IN PART, BECAUSE SCIENTISTS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO PINPOINT A CAUSE OF CANCER. INDEED, THE CURRENT MEDICAL OPINION IS THAT THERE IS NO ONE CANCER VIRUS, THAT INSTEAD THERE MAY BE SEVERAL DIFFERENT CONTRIBUTING FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE VARIOUS TYPES OF CANCER THAT EXIST.

THAT IS THE THEORY BEHIND THE NEW CANCER INSTITUTE STUDY. SCIENTISTS HAVE FOUND -- STATISTICALLY -- THAT CANCER VICTIMS SHARE CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS. ALTHOUGH THEY ARE STILL UNABLE TO SHOW -- PHYSICALLY -- THAT ANY ONE OF THESE TRAITS DOES, IN FACT, CAUSE CANCER, THEY FEEL THE STATISTICAL PROOF IS GREAT ENOUGH TO DESIGNATE PEOPLE WITH CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS AS "HIGH RISK CANCER VICTIMS."

HIGH AMONG THE RISK FACTORS LISTED IN THE STUDY IS CIGARETTE SMOKING. STATISTICALLY, THE INSTITUTE SAYS, THE DANGER OF LUNG CANCER AMONG SMOKERS IS TEN TIMES THAT OF THE NON-SMOKING POPULATION. AND WHEN SMOKING IS COMBINED WITH OTHER FACTORS -- INHALATION OF CHEMICALS IN FACTORIES,

THE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL -- THE STUDY SHOWS THAT THE RISK OF CANCER IS EVEN GREATER.

HEREDITY MAY ALSO PLAY A KEY ROLE. WOMEN WITH A FAMILY HISTORY OF BREAST CANCER RAN SIX TO NINE TIME THE RISK OF DEVELOPING THE DISEASE AS DID OTHER WOMEN. SUFFERERS FROM DOWNS SYNDROME -- A CONDITION OF MENTAL RETARDATION CAUSED BY A CHROMOSOME ABNORMALITY -- HAVE ELEVEN TIMES THE NORMAL RISK OF GETTING LEUKEMIA.

ENVIRONMENT ALSO IS A FACTOR. HIGH RATES OF LUNG, LIVER, AND BLADDER CANCER ARE FOUND IN AREAS WITH HIGH EMPLOYMENT IN CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES. OTHER RISKS COVERED BY THE STUDY INCLUDE EXPOSURE TO THE SUN, AIR POLLUTION, AS WELL AS THE EFFECT OF CERTAIN DRUGS.

THE STUDY ADVOCATES "PREVENTIVE ONCOLOGY" -- A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY PEOPLE WHO RUN THE GREATEST RISK OF GETTING CANCER AND THEN TO TEST THESE PEOPLE REGULARLY TO SEE WHETHER THEY SHOW SIGNS OF THE DISEASE. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF ALL CANCER DEATHS COULD BE AVOIDED BY SUCH EARLY DETECTION, AND, THE AT A TIME WHEN CANCER HAS BECOME THE SECOND GREATEST KILLER IN THE UNITED STATES, THAT COULD MEAN SAVING ABOUT ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND LIVES A YEAR. IT IS NOT A CURE FOR CANCER, BUT IT WOULD BE, THE DOCTORS AGREE, A MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT.

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